

Lower Colorado River Operations Program

LOCATION: All areas within the Lower Colorado Region boundaries.

DESCRIPTION/JUSTIFICATION: The program realigned and consolidated activities previously located in multiple programs into a single program that is part of the “water master” function on the lower Colorado River mainstream. This function is unique to the lower Colorado River and is based primarily on the Boulder Canyon Project Act of 1928, Mexican Water Treaty, and specific requirements of the Supreme Court Decree in *Arizona v. California* which requires the Secretary of the Interior to administer and carry out functions related to the use of Colorado River water by any entity in the lower Basin States of Arizona, California, and Nevada. The program includes responsibilities in operation and management of the river water contracting, water entitlements, and decree accounting requirements.

The program also includes work resulting from Endangered Species Act consultations and compliance with environmental statutes such as the National Environmental Policy Act. The most significant consultation was the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Biological Opinion on operation and maintenance activities on the lower Colorado River, from Lake Mead to the southerly International Boundary with Mexico. The Opinion was issued on April 30, 1997, and found jeopardy to two species of native fish and one bird. The Opinion contains a Reasonable and Prudent Alternative which includes 17 provisions to remove jeopardy and 14 terms and measures to reduce the amount of incidental take of these three species. These actions must be implemented by Reclamation during a five-year period from the date of the Opinion to maintain endangered species compliance for the lower Colorado River operations and maintenance program and allow river operations to continue as planned. Several of these provisions have required due dates that must be met within this time frame and work proposed in this program will meet these requirements and dates. One provision of the Opinion requires the establishment of a lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program.

Reclamation’s share of funding to complete the lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program is included within this program. This effort is a 50-50 cost shared program to develop a long-term (50-year) plan to conserve over 100 state and Federal special status species along the lower Colorado River from Lake Mead to Mexico through implementation of conservation elements. This long-term plan will provide the basis for Section 7 compliance for river operations for Federal and non-Federal purposes after the five-year interim period. If the interim period work necessary to establish a long-term plan is not completed within this five-year period, Reclamation will have to reinitiate Section 7 consultation to achieve Endangered Species Act compliance for the next 50 years to assure continued river operations. If this were to happen, it is likely that the results of Section 7 compliance would require additional funding from Reclamation in the future as well as a loss of non-Federal participation and cost-sharing.

The increased funding level for FY 2001 is required to initiate conservation measures associated with the surplus criteria for the Colorado river, as well as several of the Opinion provisions, and to ensure that ongoing implementation efforts on all of the interim (five-year consultation) provisions are continued or completed to maintain compliance with the Endangered Species Act. Also continuing are watermaster functions for the management of the lower Colorado River. The Opinion activities are primarily related to protection of habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher through lease, purchase and/or restoration of

habitat, and creation of additional open water habitats for two native fish species.

AUTHORIZATION: Colorado River Front Work and Levee System and amendments, March 3, 1925; the Boulder Canyon Act of 1928; the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, March 10, 1934; the 1944 Mexican Water Treaty; the 1964 Supreme Court Decree - Arizona v. California; P.L. 90-537, the Colorado River Basin Project Act, September 30, 1968; and P.L. 93-205, Endangered Species Act of 1973, December 28, 1973, as amended.

SUMMARIZED FINANCIAL DATA

Program Financial Data

Activity	FY 2001	FY 2002
Water and Energy Management and Development	\$4,748,000	\$5,503,000
Fish and Wildlife Management and Development	8,620,826	11,265,000
Total Program	13,368,826	16,768,000
Prior Year Funds	(139,826)	0
Non-Federal	(1,500,000)	(3,665,000)
Enacted	\$11,729,000	\$13,103,000
Underfinancing	(763,000)	0
FY 2001 Rescission (P.L. 106-554)	(24,000)	0
Total Reclamation Allotment	\$10,942,000	\$13,103,000

WORK PROPOSED FOR FY 2002:

Water and Energy Management and Development -

Administration of Colorado River - Begins administrative management of the Lower Colorado Region's hydro power relationships with existing and potential customers with process analysis of external activities of electric utilities and their impact on the Region's generation facilities. Continues the administration of 43 CFR 417 consultations, modeling development, planning studies, development and preparation of the Annual Operating Plan, operating criteria, flood control reviews, and analysis of the Colorado River and reservoir operations. Continues the management and oversight of operating criteria, development of banking and marketing regulations, studies of the river's operation and impact on Central Arizona Project operations, and fulfilling the requirements of the Secretary's role as water master. Continues the preparation of environmental requirements of the annual operating criteria, the five-year plan, regulations associated with system shortages and excesses and proposed regulations regarding lower Colorado River entitlements.

\$2,808,000

Water Contract Administration - Begins development and implementation of the California 4.4 plan to ensure that California stays within its annual allotment of 4.4 million acre feet of Colorado River Water. Continues administration, execution, negotiation, consultation, development and research of water and operation and maintenance contracts located within the lower Colorado River basin, and under Section 5 of the Boulder Canyon Project Act. Continues studies to develop user fees, geographic information systems database management activities of the land and waters within the lower basin, and well inventory data and analysis.

1,619,000

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Decree Accounting - Continues the development and use of techniques for calculation of consumptive use by water and irrigation districts along the mainstream of the Colorado River. Continues compliance activities required for delivery of water to Mexico. Continues the development of data for the consumptive uses and losses report for the lower Colorado River basin and provides for the analysis of special use and Warren Act water contracts. 1,076,000

Subtotal - Water and Energy Management and Development \$5,503,000

Fish and Wildlife Management and Development - The following initiatives partially fulfill requirements of the lower Colorado River Biological Opinion:

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program - Continues in the partnering and management of the contracts developing the Multi-Species Conservation Program, development and implementation of interim conservation measures, and implementation of reasonable and prudent alternatives for short-term endangered species activity compliance associated with Colorado River operations and maintenance. Continues implementation of biological opinion requirements for short-term compliance, while permitting current and future water diversions and power production. Continues hydrologic data modeling runs, analysis and data exchange with the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group in support of the reasonable and prudent alternatives development and Multi-Species Conservation Program goals to support river operations. 6,129,000
Non-Federal: Various (3,000,000)
3,129,000

Flycatcher Protection - Continues agreements with appropriate land management agencies along the lower Colorado River and leasing of lands for maintaining the acreage protection requirements of the Opinion. Continues the cowbird trapping program in the Virgin River and Havasu National Wildlife Refuge areas with studies to determine reproductive success and causes of nest failures, studies to assess the benefits of fire breaks and participation in fire management activities, and closure of levee roads. Continues the Opinion program requirements for protection of occupied flycatcher habitat, regardless of plant species composition, and unoccupied, but potential flycatcher habitat, including stands of willow, cottonwood willow, and mixtures of saltcedar and cottonwood willow under lands managed by Reclamation. Continues lower Grand Canyon sedimentation, vegetation, and avian studies and documentation to meet biological opinion requirements. 1,156,000

Razorback and Bonytail Chub Protection - Begins reintroduction and augmentation efforts of the bonytail chub into lakes Mohave and Havasu. Continues efforts to minimize takes of the bonytail chub and razorback sucker through the tagging of fish with radio and/or sonic transmitters to follow their progress, studies to assess and reduce the potential stranding of eggs, larvae or individual fish to determine the implementation strategies required, and continues studies to determine population sizes and locations in Lake Mead for population protection efforts. Continues the raising of 25,000 fingerling razorbacks for ultimate stocking into the Colorado River below Parker Dam. Continues studies to develop innovative methods and sites, such as local golf course ponds and ornamental ponds at local parks, to be renovated for use as rearing ponds sufficient to augment the razorback and bonytail chub in the rivers and lakes of the lower Colorado River basin. 208,000

Riparian Restoration and Research - Continues aerial or satellite imaging and mapping of vegetation on the lower Colorado River for establishing baseline mapping for the biological analysis of terrestrial and riparian vegetation to determine operational configurations. Continues surveys, monitoring, dispersal and recolonization studies, monitoring of productivity and survivorship, predation and parasitism, habitat relationships, and determining ecological conditions of the flycatcher that will promote habitat on the lower Colorado River. 363,000

Native Fish Protected Habitat - Continues dredging and restoration efforts to augment and/or restore up to 300 acres of habitat areas within the existing riverine and other protected habitat populations. Continues the collection of native fish larvae and subsequent protection at the newly formed impoundment at Hart Mine Marsh. 1,194,000

Ecological Restoration - Begins data collection, design, permitting, construction and monitoring of the reconnection of Walker Lake to the mainstem of the Colorado river which has been isolated from the main river channel. Continues revegetation work, monitoring and channel improvements for restoration in the Laguna Division, installation of monitoring wells, conducting soil testing, monitor flows and water levels, and to monitor vegetation growth for the restoration process. Continues implementation studies as the result of “opportunistic flows” from higher than normal releases to aid in the restoration of the river. Continues studies, monitoring and research efforts to provide native vegetation for the endangered Yuma clapper rail and other marsh nesting waterfowl. 1,350,000

Water Transfers Within California Conservation Measures - Begins conservation measures associated with the transfer of Colorado River water among California water users. These measures include stocking 20,000 razorback suckers below Parker Dam, restoration or creation of 44 acres of backwater habitat for native fish, capture of adult bonytail chub from Lake Mohave, restoration and maintenance of an additional 372 acres of riparian habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher.

665,000

Non-Federal: City of San Diego and MWD

(665,000)

0

Fish and Wildlife Program Administration - Continues management and administration of the program to fulfill the Opinion requirements, and for meeting the rules and regulations applicable to the environmental and NEPA requirements of the Colorado River operations. 200,000

Subtotal - Fish and Wildlife Management and Development

7,600,000

Reclamation Request

\$13,103,000